

Washington, DC – U.S. Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) announced nearly \$8 million in Housing and Urban Development grants in El Paso and Bexar Counties. The grants are part of HUD's Continuum of Care program, which keeps local homeless programs functioning and prevents interruption of care.

"The number of people living on the streets and lacking basic services is staggering throughout Texas and our nation. The homeless are young, old, male, female, veterans and often employed," said Congressman Rodriguez, who serves on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation and Housing and Urban Development. "As we enter the winter months, it's even more important that we continue to fund the agencies that do the critical work of providing housing and services to our most vulnerable populations."

Continuum of Care programs provide permanent and transitional housing to the homeless. The grants are part of nearly \$1.4 billion in grants being awarded nationwide to support 6,445 programs that will offer much-needed housing and services to homeless individuals and families.

Sandra Braham, CEO of the YWCA El Paso del Norte Region, said the HUD grants will provide funding for housing through the Transitional Living Center and for transitional services through the Mi Casa Homeless Child Development Center.

"These grants are absolutely needed, especially in an area like El Paso, where we have so much need," Braham said. "At the Transitional Living Center, we help people with housing but also help them increase their job skills, increase their educational skills and develop the parenting skills they need to relate to their children in a healthy way."

The Mi Casa program is the area's only daycare center for homeless children from infancy through age 12. There, they can have healthy meals and learn skills in a safe environment while their parents are out seeking work and taking care of other issues they may have.

"You can't build lives and build homes without addressing the broader needs of homeless families," Braham said. "Many of our kids show up at Mi Casa hungry, without shoes, without coats. Their parents may not even have diapers since they're coming from the shelter. You want kids who are ready to go to school and learn and we help them get there."

Congressman Rodriguez said the HUD grants will help meet increased need in the coming months.

“There will always be a need for this type of funding and I commend Secretary Shaun Donovan on making continued assistance for homeless programs a HUD priority,” Congressman Rodriguez said.

The YWCA El Paso del Norte Region covers El Paso County, parts of southern New Mexico and West Texas, including Fabens, Tornillo and Sierra Blanca. Other El Paso County recipients include the Center Against Family Violence, Centro San Vicente, the El Paso Coalition for the Homeless, El Paso MHMR, La Posada Home, Inc., Rescue Mission of El Paso, Inc., Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, Inc. and the Opportunity Center for the Homeless.

For more information about the grants, visit
www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/budget/2009/index.cfm

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